



(S//SI) What SIGINT Revealed About the Egyptian Election

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(S//SI) SIGINT checks the accuracy of the official election results.

(S//SI) One of the most significant political developments in the Middle East this year was the 7 September Presidential election in Egypt. For the first time, the Egyptian people were offered a choice on who would lead them. The Egyptian Team (S2E321) in the Office of Middle East North Africa was able to provide some unique insight into the accuracy of the officially reported results.

(U) First some background. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, responding to domestic and foreign pressure for more democracy, surprised nearly everyone earlier this year by calling for a multi-candidate Presidential election. In the past, the Egyptian Parliament, packed with regime supporters, would nominate a single candidate (the incumbent, of course), who would then be overwhelmingly endorsed in a popular referendum. The reported voter turnout in these referenda was always greatly exaggerated, and no one took seriously the high "yes" vote.

(U) The introduction of a multi-candidate election required that a constitutional amendment be passed by the Parliament and approved by the people in a referendum. The rubber-stamp Parliament obliged and the referendum was held on 25 May.

(TS//SI//REL) SIGINT on the day of the referendum revealed the clear intention of security authorities to tamper with the results. Government officials issued instructions early in the day to report a voter turnout of 40 to 50 percent and a "yes" vote of about 80 percent. When official results were announced the next day, voter turnout was said to be 54 percent with an affirmative vote of 83 percent, that is, the results were pretty much in line with the instructions. (Most foreign observers on the scene described actual voter turnout as very light, nowhere near 50 percent.)

(U) Following the referendum, attention immediately turned to the Presidential election itself, which was to be held on 7 September. Pressure mounted both internally and internationally for this election, unlike the just-completed referendum, to be "free, fair, and transparent." President Mubarak was opposed by 9 other candidates, only two of whom were considered serious - Ayman Nour of the recently created Tomorrow Party, who had been the target of a highly publicized and politically motivated criminal investigation; and Numan Gomaa of the long-established but nearly moribund Wafd Party. The law called for the election campaign to last a ridiculously brief 3 weeks.

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(U) Hosni Mubarak (Reuters) (U) Ayman Nour (Reuters) (U) Numan Gomaa (Reuters)

(U) That Mubarak would win was a foregone conclusion, given the regime's control of the media and other factors. There was much interest, however, in whether the vote-count would be honest, or whether this would be one more phony election in an authoritarian state.

(U) The officially announced election returns showed a voter turnout of only 23 percent, with Mubarak garnering 88.6 percent of the ballots cast, followed by Nour with 7.6 percent and Gomaa with 2.9 percent.

(TS//SI//REL) What did SIGINT have to say about this? **SIGINT provided good evidence that there was no massive fraud in the vote count.** Local vote totals reported on the day of the election by Egyptian authorities conformed closely to the final results. In addition, and very significantly, top Egyptian officials, following the election, were dismayed that the upstart Nour

had placed second; they had wanted Gomaa to be the runner-up. This suggests that while there may have been irregularities at the local level, the central government did not manipulate the overall vote count, and the reported results are probably a fair reflection of how Egyptians actually voted. Had Cairo manipulated the vote totals, Gomaa presumably would have placed second instead of Nour. It should also be noted that the officially reported 23 percent voter turnout does not appear to have been faked. Not only is it hard to imagine that the regime would have wanted such a low turnout, given what it says about the people's lack of enthusiasm for the candidates or lack of trust in the election's fairness, but estimates made by Egyptian Intelligence on the day of the election put voter turnout at approximately this level.

(S//SI) The next big test for Egypt's nascent democracy will be the Parliamentary elections in November. MENA's Egyptian team will be watching closely.

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